



Bird Stewardship Training:

June 21, 7:00pm EST: Sarasota County. [Register online.](#)

Events:

Now - June 3: [Black Birders Week 2023](#)

Reminder:

June 10 - 16: the June count window for the [Breeding Bird Protocol](#). Whenever possible, weekly surveys are preferred for routes with active nesting; it helps capture information about peak counts.

All Summer: Beach stewards are needed at important beach nesting sites. Check out the [map of local stewardship opportunities](#) and contact us to get involved!

FSA News

Sea Turtle and Shorebird Monitors: When You're on the Beach

Summer is in the air, and for shorebirds and sea turtles, eggs are on, or in, the beach. And that means Florida Shorebird Alliance (FSA) Partners and Marine Turtle Permit Holders (MTPH) are also on the beach. If you're one of the persons working for the conservation of Florida's sea turtles and shorebirds, there are a few things to remember during your time on the sand.

Sea turtles access the beach at night to bury their eggs within the sand, usually ten inches or deeper. The eggs of shorebirds, however, are laid on the open sand. Also, unlike sea turtle hatchlings, flightless chicks remain on the beach until they are fledged – and they don't just remain in the posted areas. Chicks of both colonial and solitary nesters can be anywhere on the beach from the waterline up to the dunes, and they can travel far from the original marked nest site. The primary defensive response for flightless chicks is to freeze and press against the sand surface, which makes them vulnerable to foot and vehicle traffic.

During the shorebird nesting season, FSA partners post nesting areas by encircling the area with posts and flagging or twine. The time frame from nest initiation to fledging of seabird and shorebird chicks is typically no longer than 60 days and determines how long an area is posted. However, because nests are asynchronous (not all nests are initiated on the same day), if there is more than one nest within a posted area such as in a large seabird colony, this time frame may stretch out over a longer period. Because each posted area is unique, it is best for MTPH and shorebird monitors to coordinate closely to determine the anticipated completion date for nesting at any site.

When surveying on the beach please remember to respect posted areas, as often there will be eggs and chicks on the ground. Any disturbance within the site could cause the adult birds to flush, leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable to predation, exposure to the intense heat from the sun, or starvation. Chicks may become separated from their parents during a disturbance event, or adults may permanently abandon a nest due to human disturbance.

Seabirds and shorebirds are protected under state and federal laws, and there can be legal ramifications for anyone entering a posted area, even with the best intentions. MTPH that survey a beach with posted shorebird nests must be extra vigilant, both on an ATV and on foot, during early morning surveys to watch for shorebird chicks and fledglings. Sea turtle nest surveyors must respect the posted area, entering only if specifically authorized to do so by FWC staff at MTP@myfwc.com.

It is still important to get accurate information on any sea turtle crawls that might occur within posted shorebird areas or adjacent to posted nests. Marine Turtle Permit Holders should observe the crawl to the degree possible from the outside of the posted area and install a marker outside the postings or away from the solitary nest to indicate the approximate location of the crawl or nest. Once the postings for the birds are removed, the MTPH can enter the area and post as large a section as needed for protection of any potential sea turtle nests. Sea turtle nest inventories should be done after the postings are removed. If you are a Marine Turtle Permit Holder or a shorebird monitor and have questions about posted areas, please contact shorebird@myfwc.com or mtp@myfwc.com and we will help you.

Thank you for your work protecting Florida's sea turtles and shorebirds!

Sea turtle photo by Blair Witherington

Be a Shorebird-friendly Photographer

Photography of shorebirds and seabirds along Florida's shores is a popular activity. Observing shorebirds and seabirds can be exciting, and admirers are often eager to photograph the charismatic birds that take residence on the beaches each year. When taking photos, please take great care to avoid disturbing the birds, and their nests and chicks. Many shorebird populations are in decline, due in part to human disturbance. By photographing shorebirds without disturbing them, you help protect and conserve them. If you are one of the lucky people to encounter and photograph shorebirds and seabirds, please remember how to be a shorebird-friendly photographer.

When photographing a bird on a nest:

Remain outside the posted area. No part of you or your camera equipment should go beyond the string or signs. If the area around the nest is not staked off, you should remain far enough away to avoid disturbing the birds (typically 300 feet). If the birds show any sign of agitation as a result of your presence, quietly and slowly retreat until the birds no longer appear disturbed.

Stay far enough away for the bird to remain on its nest. Back off immediately if you flush a bird. Sometimes birds nest near the edge of a posted boundary, so even if you are outside the string, if the bird responds to you, you're too close.

Scan for shorebird and seabird predators. Make sure there are no predators nearby such as raccoons, cats, and crows that may be attracted to human presence or scent. They are alert to movement, so by flushing a bird, you may inadvertently help predators notice birds that would otherwise have remained camouflaged.

Stay 10 minutes or less. Too much time near the nest may unduly stress the birds. Be considerate and do not spend more than 10 minutes near the nest.

If other photographers are present, try to coordinate your time near the nest, and leave the area together, so that the birds have at least three hours of undisturbed time.

Don't specify the nest's exact location when sharing or publishing photos. Advertising the birds' nesting location may draw additional disturbance to the nest.

When photographing birds that are away from their nests, or birds with chicks:

Stay at least 100 ft away from the birds. Wait for the birds to approach you for closer shots. Stay far enough away so the birds do not change their behavior in response to your presence.

Don't "push" the birds around the beach. Birds need to be able to feed and rest without disturbance. Shorebird chicks must constantly forage to gain enough weight to fledge in time, so any time taken away from foraging can be harmful to their health and survival.

Additional shorebird-friendly resources can be found at:

[How to Be a Shorebird-friendly Photographer](#)

[A Guide to Ethical Photography](#)

FLORIDA SHOREBIRD DATABASE

AN ONLINE TOOL FOR ENTERING AND EXPLORING DATA ON FLORIDA'S SHOREBIRDS AND SEABIRDS.



FSD Updates

Data Entry Tips - Optional Fields

Do you use the “Optional Fields” in the [Florida Shorebird Database \(FSD\)](#)?

If you have ever entered chick observations, nest site visits, or colony site visits into the FSD, you may have noticed these “Optional Fields” at the bottom of the data entry pages. As the name suggests, you are not required to fill out these fields, but this is still great data to collect and enter if you are able!

The “Optional Fields” are used to document threats and disturbances observed near nests, colonies, or chicks. Shorebirds share valuable coastline habitat with people and other animals and sometimes these diverse beach users do not exist harmoniously together, leading to conflicts – an off-leash dog chases a flock of juvenile black skimmers resting on a sand bar, a ghost crab steals eggs from a snowy plover nest, or a kite surfer flies too low over a least tern colony causing the adults to flush. You can use the “Optional Fields” to report these and other disturbances in the FSD, which helps inform local and statewide management strategies to provide better protection for the birds.

The first set of fields deals with disturbance – Did the birds flush? What was the cause? The second set deals with tracks – Did you see any tracks nearby? Can you identify what made them? You can document disturbances and tracks by either selecting from the listed options or by using the “Other” text box to write in a different option. If none of the disturbance or track fields are filled out, the FSD automatically assigns “not recorded”. You can use the last set of fields to document if there was beach raking nearby and if any wet wrack was present.

Don't forget to use the comment section to provide further explanation of what you observed! Reporting “tracks observed” and “ghost crab” provides the basic information of what and who, but adding comments provides the context. For example, you may have documented ghost crab tracks on two different nests visits. Without comments, all we know is that ghost crabs are in the area. But if comments are included, then we know that on the first visit “ghost crab tracks were observed 15 feet from nest” and the second visit “ghost crab tracks were observed in and around nest bowl, and one egg was missing”.

As always, we are happy to answer any questions about documenting disturbances or other data entry quandaries. Email us at FLShorebirdDatabase@myFWC.com!

Optional Fields			
Disturbance (caused birds to flush)	<input type="radio"/> Birds Flushed	<input type="checkbox"/> Walker/Runner/Cyclist	<input type="checkbox"/> Kite Surfer/Landboarder
	<input type="radio"/> Birds Did Not Flush	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog-Leashed	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles
	<input type="radio"/> Not Recorded	<input type="checkbox"/> Dog-Unleashed	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-powered Water Craft
Tracks (within 30 ft)	<input type="radio"/> Tracks Observed	<input type="checkbox"/> People	<input type="checkbox"/> Free-ranging Cats
	<input type="radio"/> No Tracks Observed	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> Snake
	<input type="radio"/> Tracks Not Recorded	<input type="checkbox"/> Ghost Crab	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
Dogs (200 ft)	# Leashed <input type="text"/>	Beach Raking (300 ft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	# Unleashed <input type="text"/>	Wet Wrack (300 ft)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
			<input type="checkbox"/> Abundant <input type="checkbox"/> Sparse
Comments: <input type="text"/>			

Ebb Tidings

Chick Data Reminder

Shorebird and seabird chicks are hatching all over the state! These chicks are on the move, and we want to know where they are going! How you report chick data in the [Florida Shorebird Database \(FSD\)](#) varies by species.

Seabird chicks are not very mobile and are dependent on their parents for food, so young chicks (downy, feathered, and some flight-capable) will remain in or very near their colony. These chicks should be counted as part of their colony using the [Seabird Colony Form](#). Flight-capable seabird chicks will eventually start to venture further and further away from their colony. These chicks should be documented using the [Roving Chick/Staging Young Form](#).

Shorebird chicks are very mobile and typically leave their nest shortly after hatching. Any shorebird chick (regardless of age) observed outside of their nest cup should be documented as a roving chick using the [Roving Chick/Staging Young Form](#). Any downy chicks observed inside the nest cup should be documented as nestlings on the [Shorebird Nest Form](#).

Check out the FSA's shorebird and seabird [Aging Guides](#) for help identifying chick ages. As always, we are happy to answer any questions about chick observations or other data entry quandaries. Email us at FLShorebirdDatabase@myFWC.com!

Black skimmer chicks photo by Jean Hall



The [Florida Shorebird Alliance](#) (FSA) is a statewide network of local partnerships committed to advancing shorebird and seabird conservation in Florida. FSA partners collaborate to identify and address important needs regarding research, management, education, outreach, and public policy. The FSA accommodates a wide range of views on the best strategies to conserve shorebirds and seabirds. However, all partners share the same goal of establishing areas where seabird and shorebird populations are viable and managed in balance with human activities.



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

QUESTIONS? [Contact the FWC](#)

STAY CONNECTED:



SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:

[Subscriber Preferences](#): Unsubscribe, Add/delete topics, modify your password or email address. Use your email

address to log in.

[Localize your news:](#) Go to Subscriber Preferences, click "Questions" and select your region(s) of interest.

[Help:](#) For assistance with your login or subscription service.

